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#20
SAM KIETH · WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBS
THE MAXX

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MAXXIMIZED

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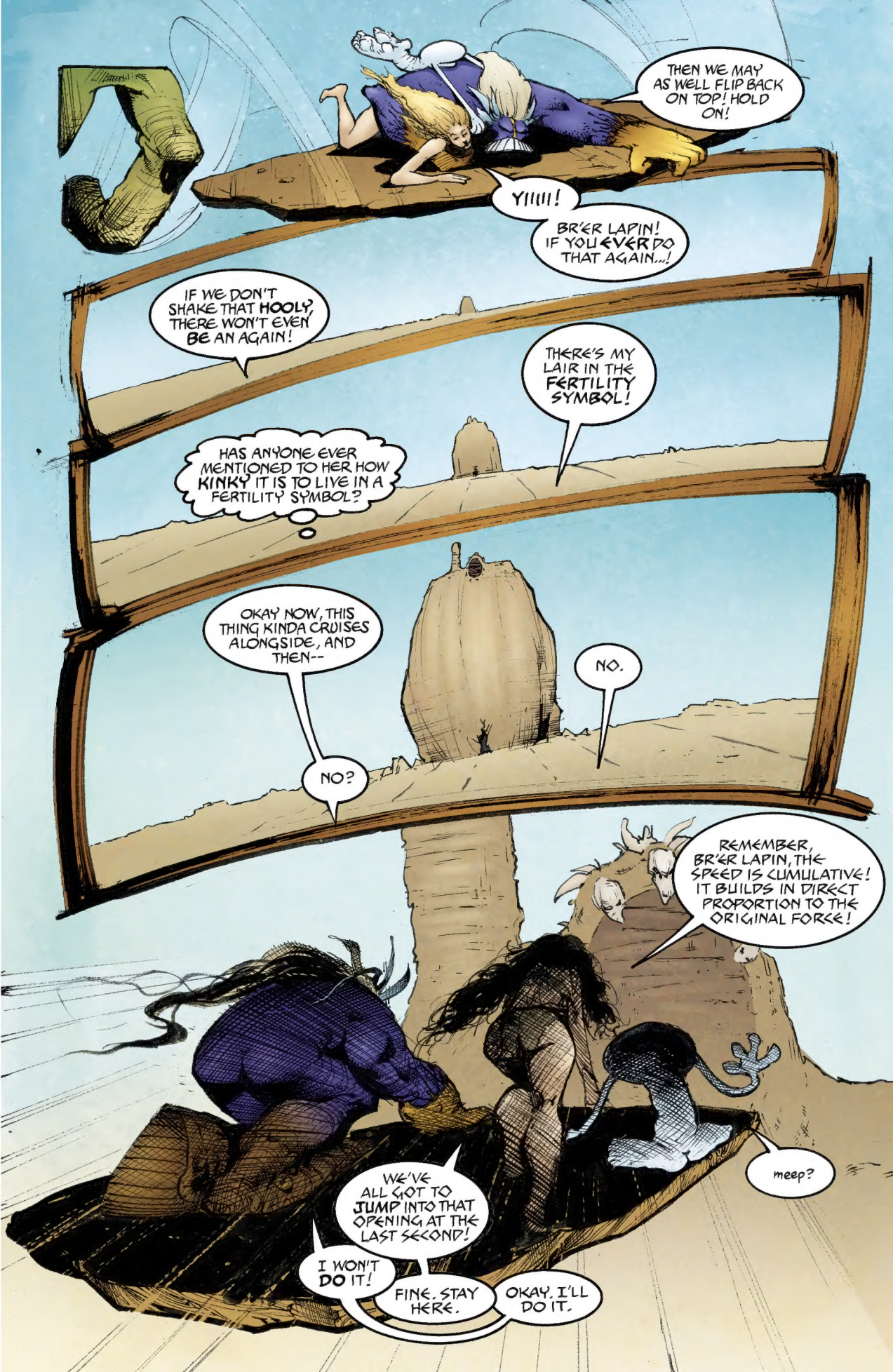
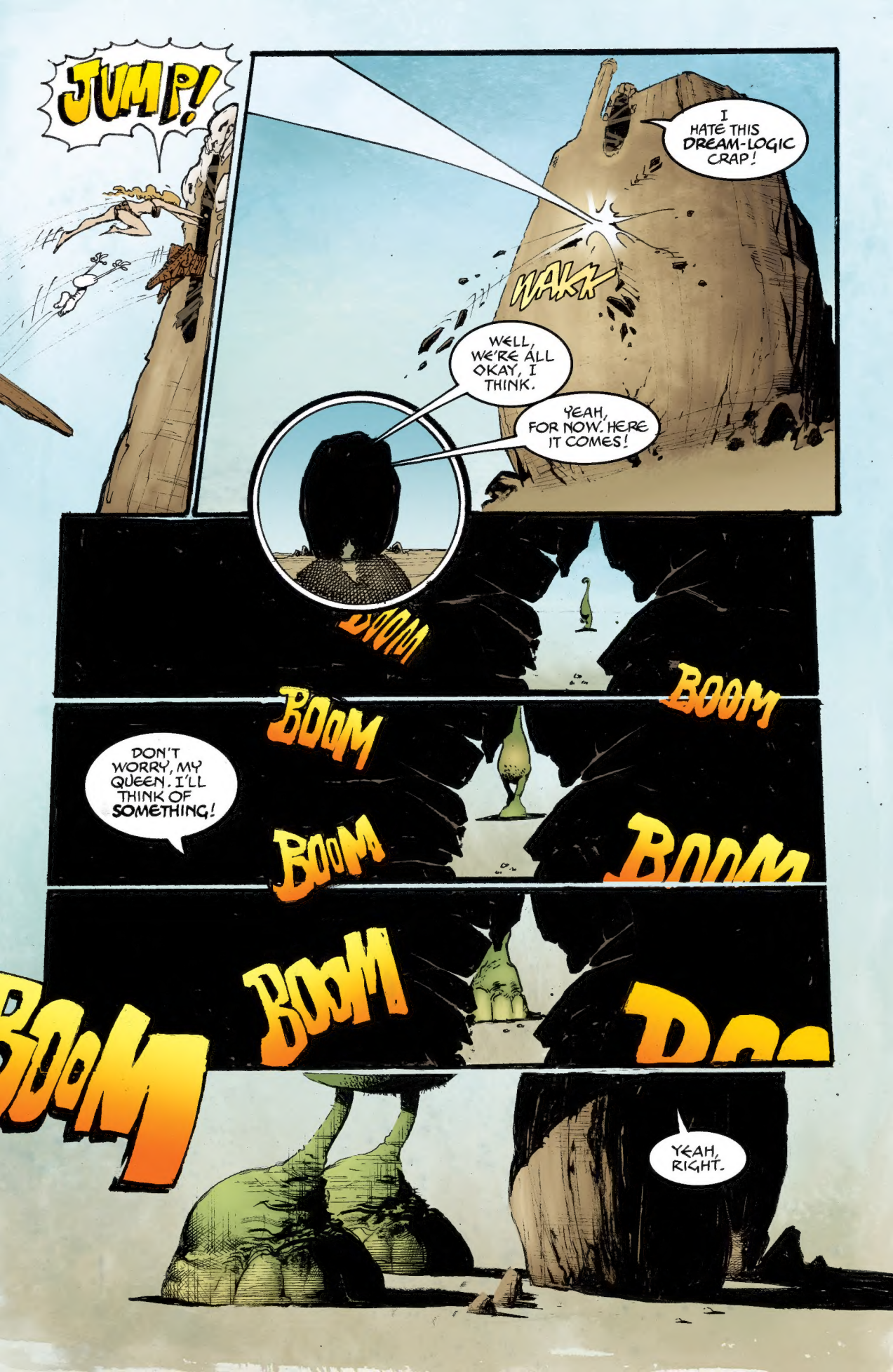
MY PLAN WORKED. I THINK WE'VE LOST IT.
REALLY, BR'ER LAPIN?
MEEP
MEEP
ABSOLUTELY! IT CAN'T SEE US UNDER HERE. AND IT CAN'T TRACK WHAT IT CAN'T SEE!
WELL, IF YOU'RE SURE...
I'M POSITIVE! WE'VE GOT THE HOOLY COMPLETELY FOOLED...!
I JUST WONDER WHY I STILL HAVE THE FEELING WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED?
WHUD

BECAUSE THE HOOLY IS BLIND, YOU IDIOT! HE'S TRACKING US BY SMELL!


THEN WE MAY AS WELL FLIP BACK ON TOP! HOLD ON!
YIIII!
BR'ER LAPIN! IF YOU EVER DO THAT AGAIN...!
IF WE DON'T SHAKE THAT HOOLY, THERE WON'T EVEN BE AN AGAIN!
THERE'S MY LAIR IN THE FERTILITY SYMBOL!
HAS ANYONE EVER MENTIONED TO HER HOW KINKY IT IS TO LIVE IN A FERTILITY SYMBOL?
OKAY NOW, THIS THING KINDA CRUISES ALONGSIDE, AND THEN--
NO?
NO.
REMEMBER, BR'ER LAPIN, THE SPEED IS CUMULATIVE! IT BUILDS IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE ORIGINAL FORCE!
meep?
WE'VE ALL GOT TO JUMP INTO THAT OPENING AT THE LAST SECOND!
I WON'T DO IT!
FINE. STAY HERE.
OKAY. I'LL DO IT.


JUMP!
I HATE THIS DREAM-LOGIC CRAP!
WHAK
WELL, WE'RE ALL OKAY, I THINK.
YEAH, FOR NOW. HERE IT COMES!
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
DON'T WORRY, MY QUEEN. I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING!
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
YEAH, RIGHT.

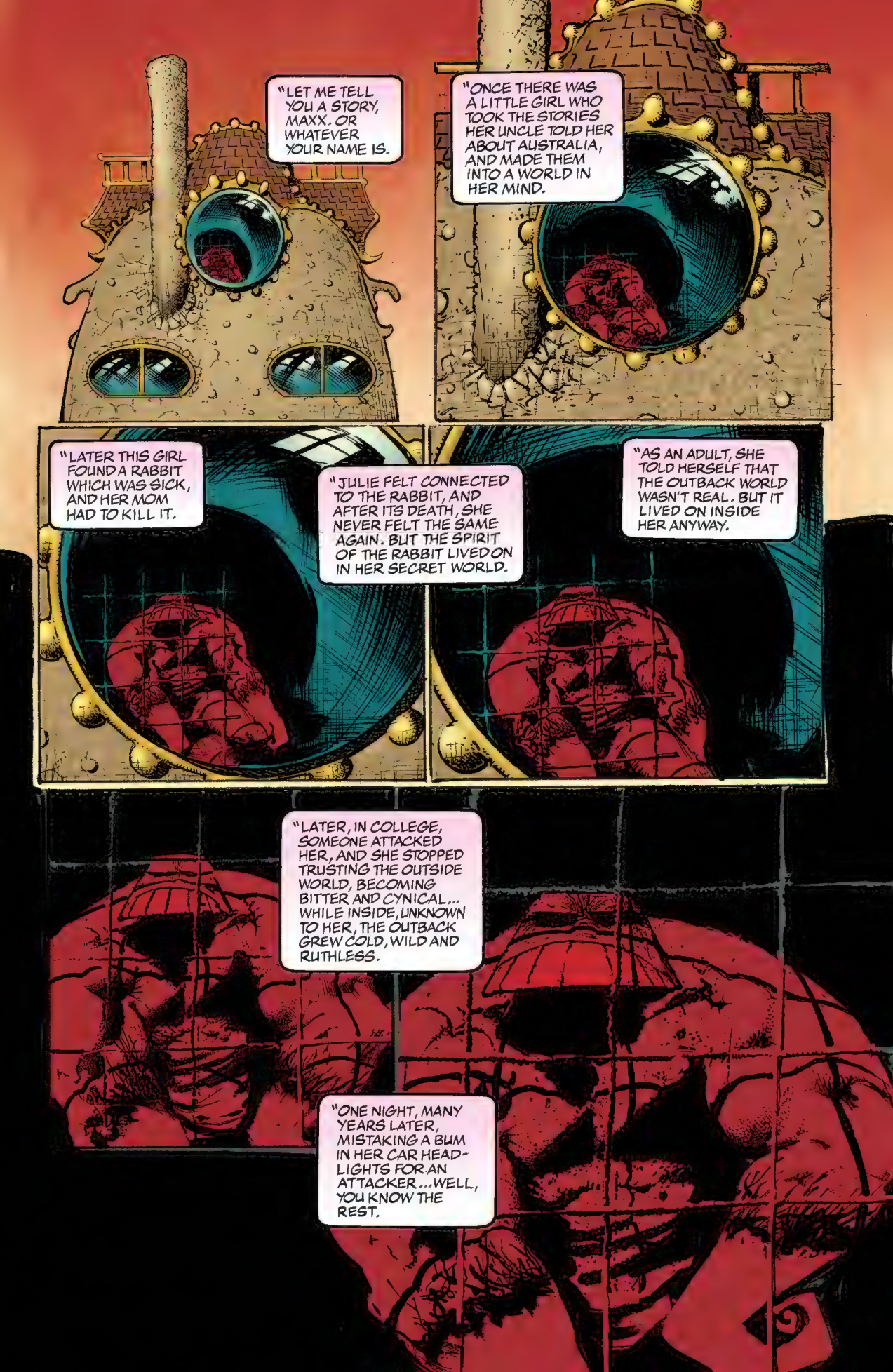
GRUK!
THIS SHOULDN'T BE HAPPENING! THE HOOLY IS THE SPIRIT OF HEALING AND PROTECTION HERE! MINDLESS VIOLENCE IS NOT THE WAY OF THE HOOLY.
GONE MUST BE INSIDE HER SOMEHOW, PERVERTING HER!
NOW THERE'S A FREUDIAN IMAGE!
THE LAND CAN ONLY BE HEALED WHEN THE HOOLY REGURGITATES THE SPIRIT OF GONE!
YOU MEAN SHE'S GOT TO THROW GONE UP?
DON'T BE CRUDE, BR'ER LAPIN.
HEY, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO BROUGHT IT UP!
"HEY, LOOK!"
"WHAT'S THAT?"

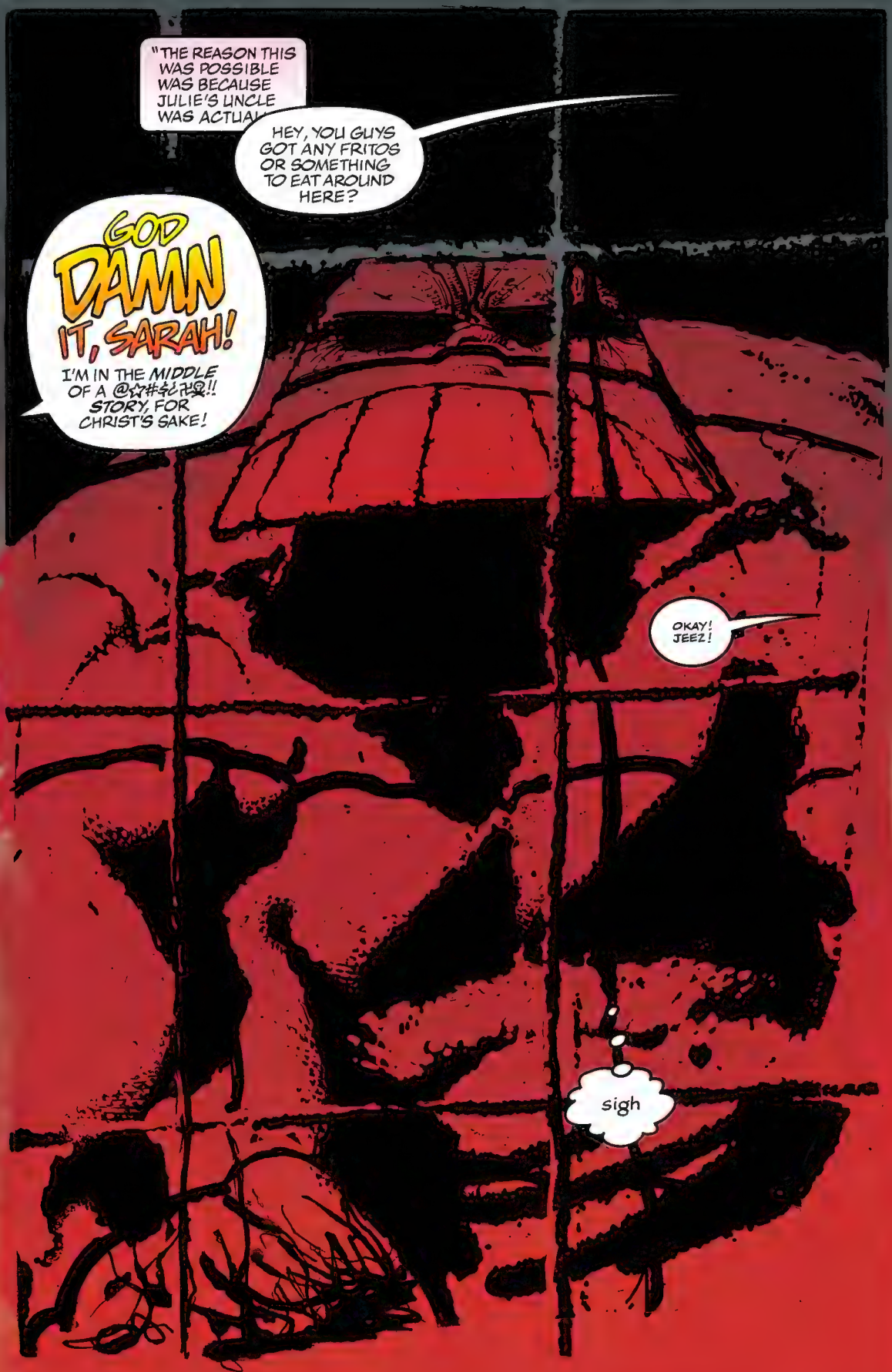
"IT MUST BE THE CHIP YOU KNOCKED OFF THE VOLCANO, RETURNING WITH A DAY'S WORTH OF MOMENTUM!
"ITS MASS MUST BE INCREASED BY A THOUSANDFOLD!"
SNIFF
SNIFF
SNIFF
"IT MISSED HER! IT MISSED THE HOOLY!"

NO IT DIDN'T.
SHHH
THE HOOLY'S GETTING UP AND WANDERING AWAY. WE WON!
THE IMPACT MUST'VE KNOCKED THE GONE RIGHT OUT OF HER!
WELL, WE'VE BEEN TO THE VOLCANO, EXPELLED THE POISON, SAVED THE OUTBACK, FULFILLED EVERY CONDITION... SO...

WHAT NOW?
I DON'T KNOW, MAXX...
YOU TELL ME. MY OUTBACK HAS BEEN CLEANSED. MY NEW HOUSE IS FINISHED. AND THOUGH PREGNANT, I'M NO LONGER SICK AS A DOG.
SO WHY DON'T I FEEL ANY BETTER?
MEX
I'M LEAVING, JULIE.

I...I DON'T BELONG HERE. I'M NOT THE MAXX NOW. NOT REALLY. I HAVE TO FIND THE LIFE I HAD BEFORE THE ACCID
FINE.
THEN GO. GOD KNOWS I'M NOT HOLDING YOU HERE.
BY THE WAY, WHY ARE YOU STILL WEARING THE COSTUME?
I'M NOT SURE. MAYBE IT'S EASIER IF YOU AND SARAH DON'T SEE WHAT I REALLY LOOK LIKE. EASIER FOR ME, ANYWAY.
DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN WE FIRST MET, JULIE? AT LEAST WHEN I FIRST THOUGHT IT WAS?
DON'T BE SO BITTER. MANY GREAT RELATIONSHIPS BEGIN WITH A HIT-AND-RUN.
SARAH, HONEY, THIS IS BETWEEN US ADULTS. WHY DON'T YOU--
RIGHT. I'M ADULT ENOUGH TO SAVE BOTH OF YOUR BUTTS, JUST NOT ADULT ENOUGH TO SIT AROUND AND WATCH YOU EMBARRASS YOURSELVES!


"LET ME TELL YOU A STORY, MAXX. OR WHATEVER YOUR NAME IS.
"ONCE THERE WAS A LITTLE GIRL WHO TOOK THE STORIES HER UNCLE TOLD HER ABOUT AUSTRALIA, AND MADE THEM INTO A WORLD IN HER MIND.
"LATER THIS GIRL FOUND A RABBIT WHICH WAS SICK, AND HER MOM HAD TO KILL IT.
"JULIE FELT CONNECTED TO THE RABBIT, AND AFTER ITS DEATH, SHE NEVER FELT THE SAME AGAIN. BUT THE SPIRIT OF THE RABBIT LIVED ON IN HER SECRET WORLD.
"AS AN ADULT, SHE TOLD HERSELF THAT THE OUTBACK WORLD WASN'T REAL. BUT IT LIVED ON INSIDE HER ANYWAY.
"LATER, IN COLLEGE, SOMEONE ATTACKED HER, AND SHE STOPPED TRUSTING THE OUTSIDE WORLD, BECOMING BITTER AND CYNICAL... WHILE INSIDE, UNKNOWN TO HER, THE OUTBACK GREW COLD, WILD AND RUTHLESS.
"ONE NIGHT, MANY YEARS LATER, MISTAKING A BUM IN HER CAR HEADLIGHTS FOR AN ATTACKER...WELL, YOU KNOW THE REST.


"THE REASON THIS WAS POSSIBLE WAS BECAUSE JULIE'S UNCLE WAS ACTUAL
HEY, YOU GUYS GOT ANY FRITOS OR SOMETHING TO EAT AROUND HERE?
GOD DAMN IT, SARAH!
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF A @☆#&?☒!! STORY, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE!
OKAY! JEEZ!
sigh

WHEN DID YOU KNOW GONE WAS YOUR UNCLE?

HE *WASN'T*, NOT THE WAY YOU MEAN. HE WAS JUST A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.

SO WE'RE *NOT* COUSINS?

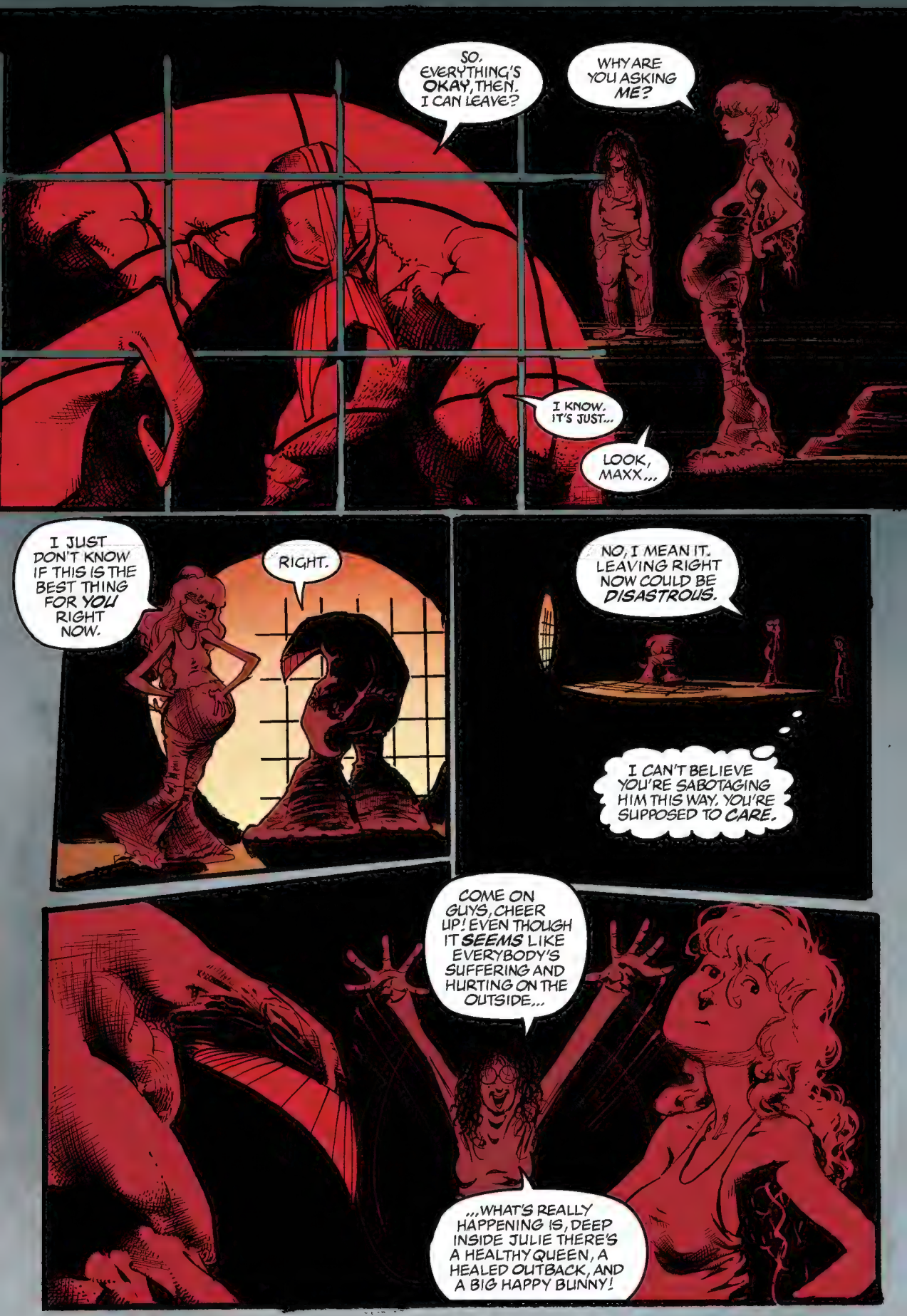
DISAPPOINTED?

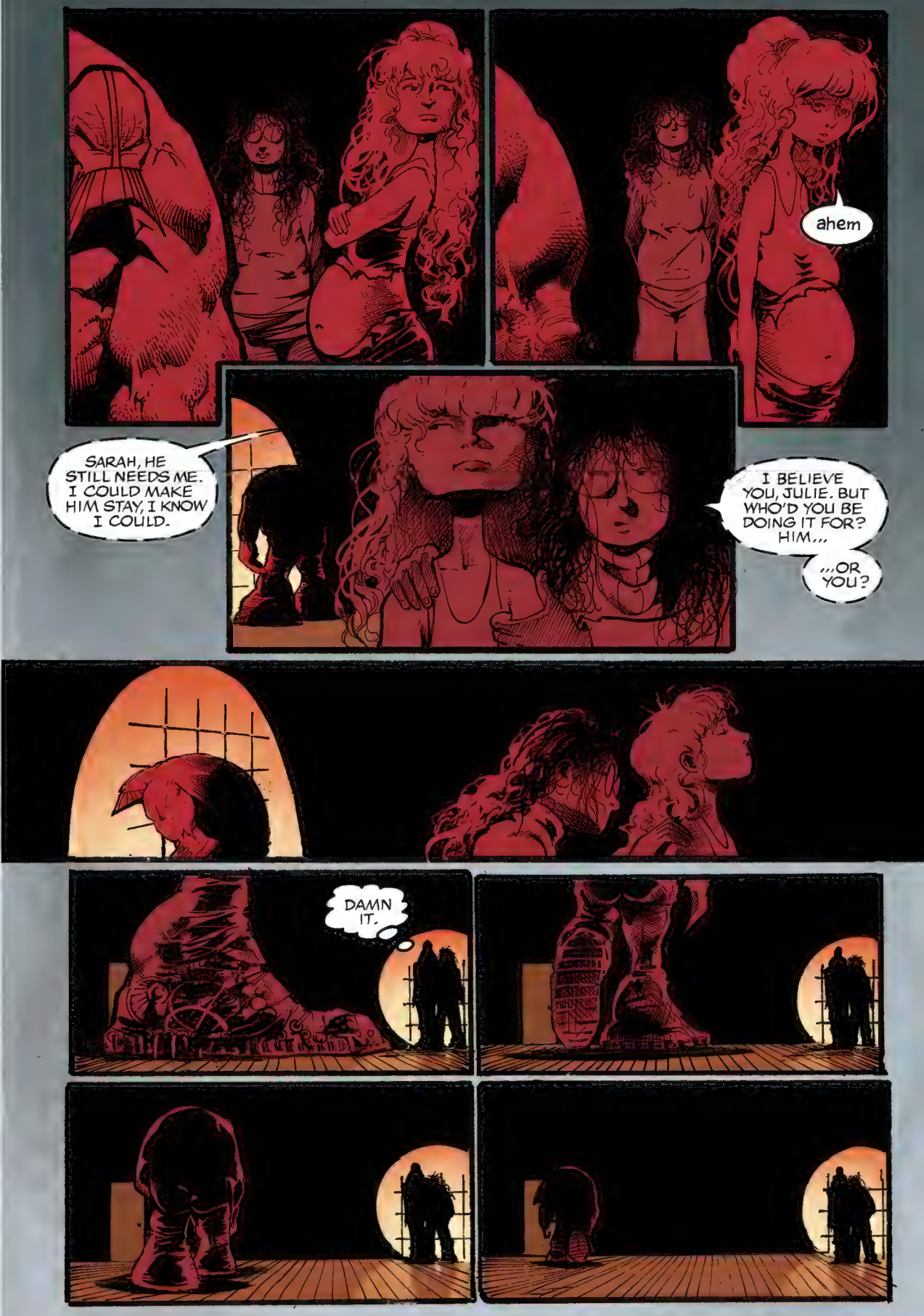
WITH *YOUR* LUCK, ACTUALLY, NO.

DO YOU SUPPOSE HE'S REALLY DEAD NOW?

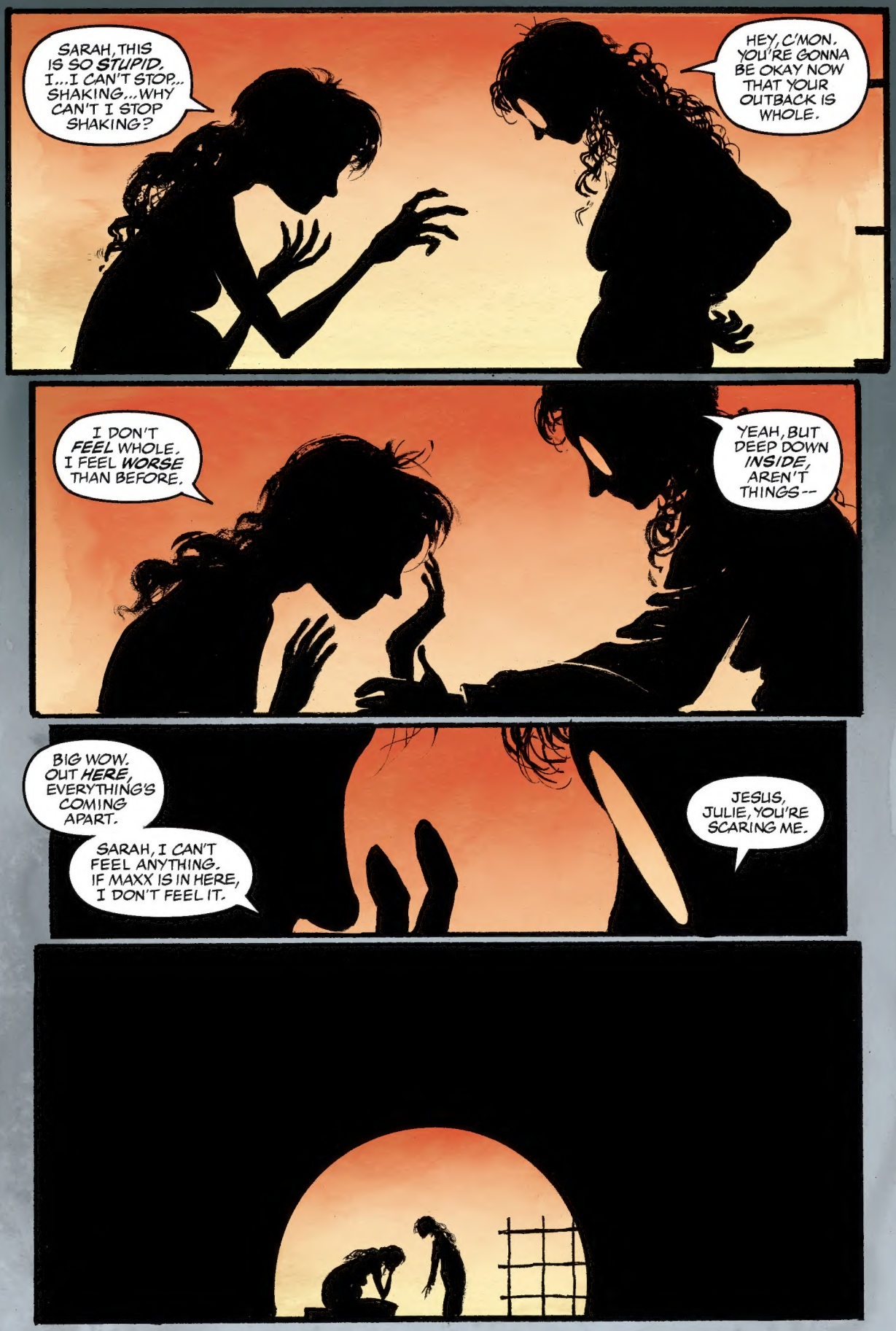
PROBABLY. AS FAR AS *I'M* CONCERNED, HE'S DEAD. THOUGH SOMEBODY WHO CAN SURVIVE AS TWO EYES AND BRAIN GOO, CLINGING TO A BATHROOM CEILING, IS PRETTY HARD TO *KILL!*

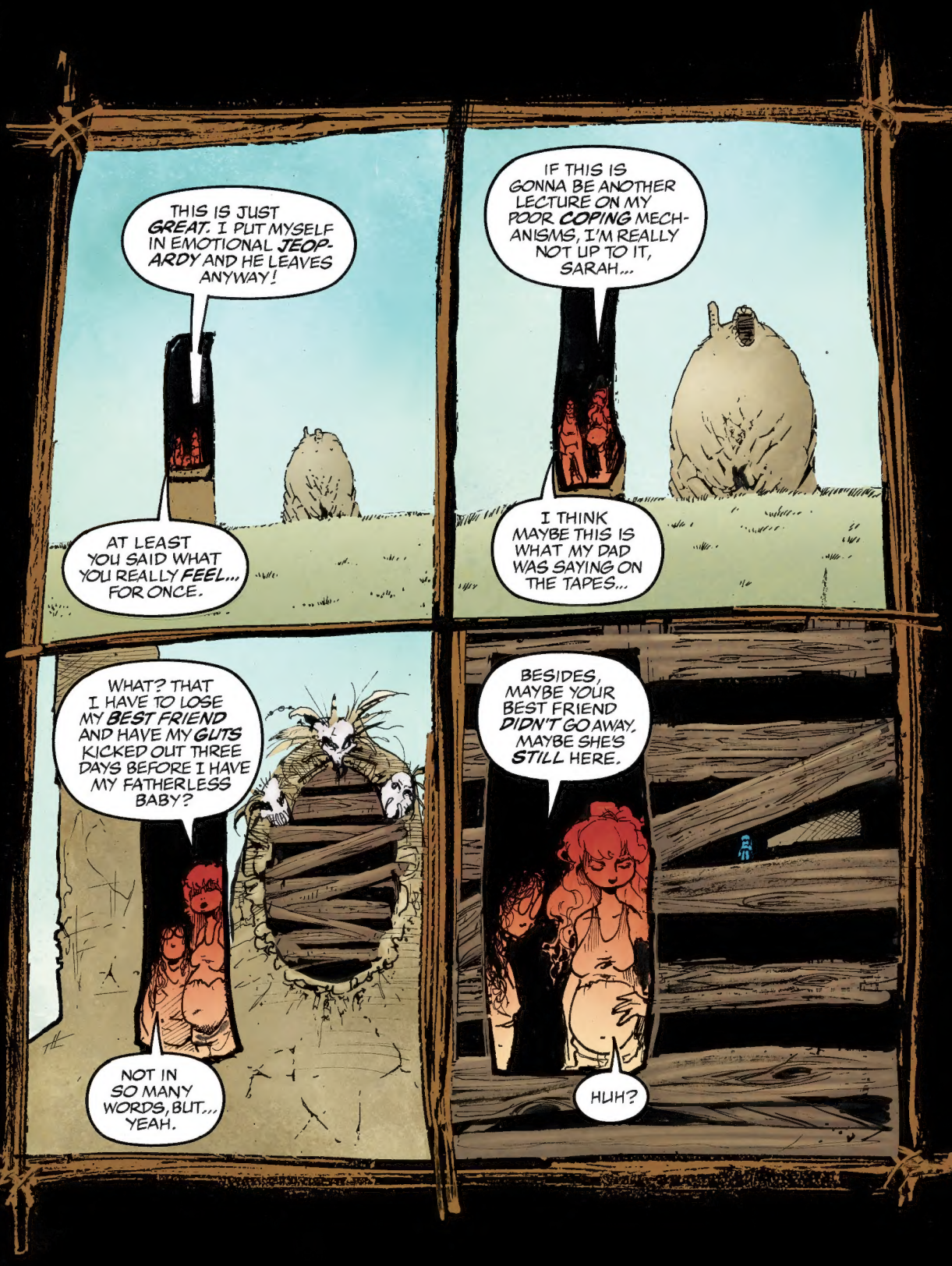
BUT I THINK HE'S STOPPED WALKING AROUND INSIDE OF MY HEAD, WHICH IS ALL I REALLY *CARE* ABOUT.

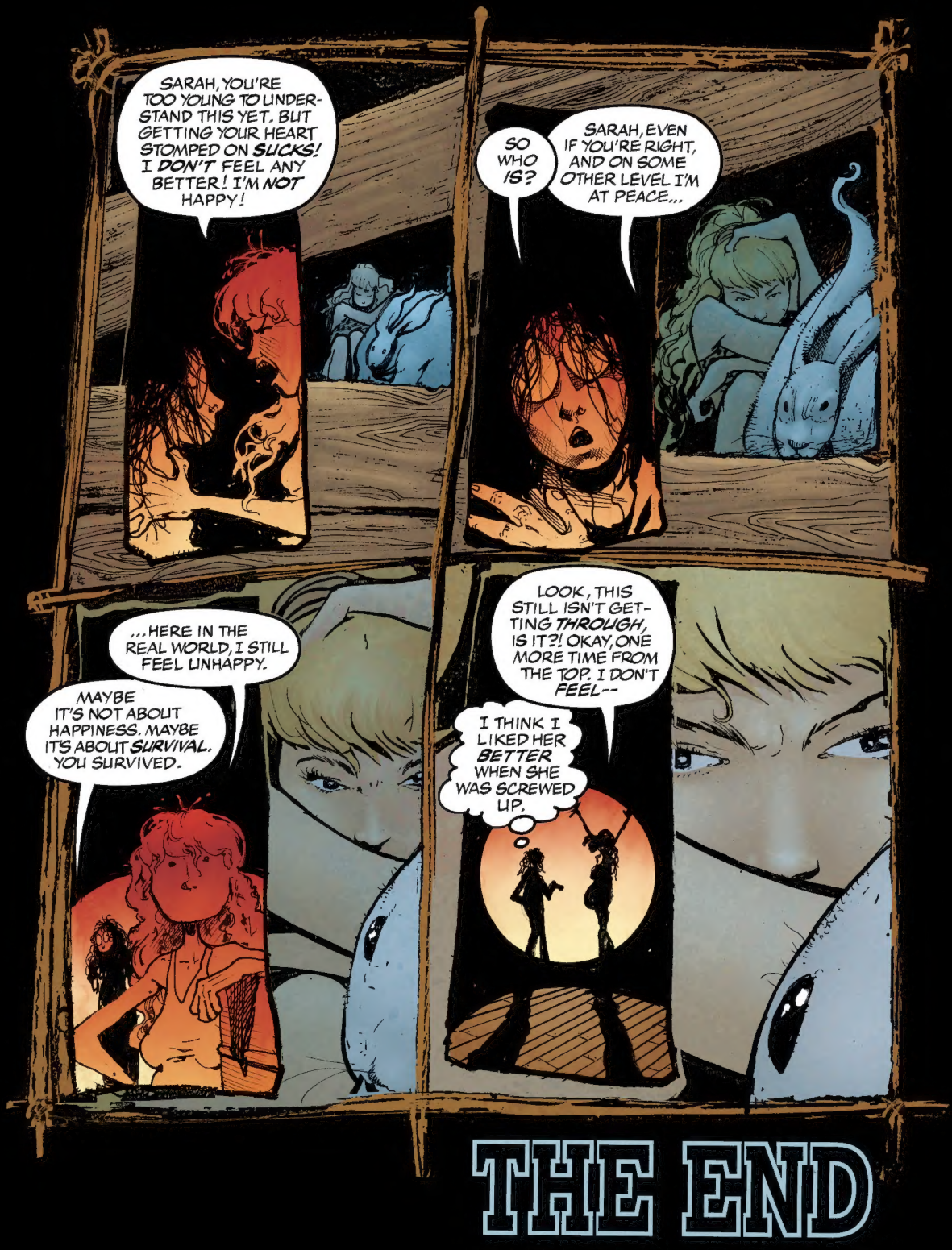

SO, EVERYTHING'S OKAY, THEN. I CAN LEAVE?
WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME?
I KNOW. IT'S JUST...
LOOK, MAXX...
I JUST DON'T KNOW IF THIS IS THE BEST THING FOR YOU RIGHT NOW.
RIGHT.
NO, I MEAN IT. LEAVING RIGHT NOW COULD BE DISASTROUS.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE SABOTAGING HIM THIS WAY. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO CARE.
COME ON GUYS, CHEER UP! EVEN THOUGH IT SEEMS LIKE EVERYBODY'S SUFFERING AND HURTING ON THE OUTSIDE...
...WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING IS, DEEP INSIDE JULIE THERE'S A HEALTHY QUEEN, A HEALED OUTBACK, AND A BIG HAPPY BUNNY!


ahem
SARAH, HE STILL NEEDS ME. I COULD MAKE HIM STAY, I KNOW I COULD.
I BELIEVE YOU, JULIE. BUT WHO'D YOU BE DOING IT FOR? HIM...
...OR YOU?
DAMN IT.

GOODBYE.
DON'T WORRY, JULIE. THE REAL MAXX WILL ALWAYS BE WITH YOU.
INSIDE... WHERE HE BELONGS.
CLICK


SARAH, THIS IS SO STUPID. I...I CAN'T STOP... SHAKING...WHY CAN'T I STOP SHAKING?
HEY, C'MON. YOU'RE GONNA BE OKAY NOW THAT YOUR OUTBACK IS WHOLE.
I DON'T FEEL WHOLE. I FEEL WORSE THAN BEFORE.
YEAH, BUT DEEP DOWN INSIDE, AREN'T THINGS--
BIG WOW. OUT HERE, EVERYTHING'S COMING APART.
SARAH, I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING. IF MAXX IS IN HERE, I DON'T FEEL IT.
JESUS, JULIE, YOU'RE SCARING ME.


THIS IS JUST GREAT. I PUT MYSELF IN EMOTIONAL JEOPARDY AND HE LEAVES ANYWAY!
AT LEAST YOU SAID WHAT YOU REALLY FEEL... FOR ONCE.
IF THIS IS GONNA BE ANOTHER LECTURE ON MY POOR COPING MECHANISMS, I'M REALLY NOT UP TO IT, SARAH...
I THINK MAYBE THIS IS WHAT MY DAD WAS SAYING ON THE TAPES...
WHAT? THAT I HAVE TO LOSE MY BEST FRIEND AND HAVE MY GUTS KICKED OUT THREE DAYS BEFORE I HAVE MY FATHERLESS BABY?
NOT IN SO MANY WORDS, BUT... YEAH.
BESIDES, MAYBE YOUR BEST FRIEND DIDN'T GO AWAY. MAYBE SHE'S STILL HERE.
HUH?


SARAH, YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND THIS YET. BUT GETTING YOUR HEART STOMPED ON SUCKS! I DON'T FEEL ANY BETTER! I'M NOT HAPPY!
SO WHO IS?
SARAH, EVEN IF YOU'RE RIGHT, AND ON SOME OTHER LEVEL I'M AT PEACE...
...HERE IN THE REAL WORLD, I STILL FEEL UNHAPPY.
MAYBE IT'S NOT ABOUT HAPPINESS. MAYBE IT'S ABOUT SURVIVAL. YOU SURVIVED.
LOOK, THIS STILL ISN'T GETTING THROUGH, IS IT?! OKAY, ONE MORE TIME FROM THE TOP. I DON'T FEEL--
I THINK I LIKED HER BETTER WHEN SHE WAS SCREWED UP.
THE END

BONUS SUBPLOT PAGE THAT WOULDN'T FIT ANYWHERE ELSE
ONE DAY IN SARAH'S OUTBACK, A LITTLE YELLOW BANANA SLUG ACCIDENTALLY FOUND A HOLE INTO OUR WORLD.
UNFORTUNATELY, SOMEONE ELSE WAS IN THAT PARTICULAR ALLEY...
...WHOSE SENSE OF SELF-ESTEEM WAS SO FRAGILE...
...THAT IT COULD ONLY BE RESTORED BY KILLING SOMETHING SMALL AND YELLOW.
STOMP
BUT SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN THAT NIGHT IN THAT ALLEY WITH THAT SLUG THAT WOULD CAUSE THE END OF THE WORLD.
DR. BLOWERS TAPE NO. MOTIVATIONAL